

Summary Report

The Indiana Trails Study

Background

The development of multi-purpose trails has become an increasingly popular initiative in communities across the country. Many successful trail development projects can be identified throughout the country, and trends in these communities show trail activities are a growing and preferred recreation activity among the populace. Federal, state and local government have made significant commitments to planning, and developing trails in the form of staff and funding. Indiana is among the states that have recently committed federal and state funds to developing trails in local communities. As a result, Indiana officials have become more interested in gathering data on trail use, trends in trail operations, and general attitudes of trail users and trail neighbors.

The Indiana Trails Study was developed to address the growing need for more information on trail use and the general attitudes of trail users and trail neighbors. Originally proposed as a summer-long research study of one trail, the study quickly became an overview, or reconnaissance level study, of six (6) different trails in Indiana. Funded by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) with additional funding by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), and the National Park Service (NPS) River, Trail, and Conservations Assistance Program, the Indiana Trails Study conducted research on trail use levels, trail management, economic impacts, property values, and attitudes toward trails in six (6) different types of communities in Indiana. The six (6) communities and trails were:

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- Fort Wayne, Rivergreenway Trail
- Goshen, Maple City Greenway Trail
- Greenfield, Pennsy Rail Trail
- Indianapolis, Monon Rail Trail
- Muncie, Cardinal Greenway Trail
- Portage, Prairie Duneland Trail

**Figure 1: Early Morning Bicyclists
On A Trail**



researchers in site selection, preferred information to be obtained, research methods and project completion. This group helped to clarify and specify the purpose of the Indiana Trails Study.

Study Locations

The six study trail sites were selected to reflect differing community populations, geographic locations, trail development-funding methods, trail types and community types. The common parameter for trail selection was that the trail had to be operating for longer than two years. Figure 2 on the following page shows the location and length of each trail selected for the Indiana Trails Study.

Trail segments included in the study were determined in conjunction with the agencies responsible for managing the six (6) selected trails. Criteria for locations included:

- Selection of trailheads that were frequently used in order to intercept users when starting or ending trail use.
- Selection of trail segments where traffic counter deployment would be centrally located along the length of the trail, and easily accessible by a majority of the communities' population.

Study Purpose

The purpose of the Indiana Trails Study was to complete a reconnaissance level study of the use levels, user characteristics, management practices, economic factors, and impacts to adjacent properties for the selected trails.

To assist in completing the study an ad-hoc advisory group, known as the Indiana Trails Study Group, was formed to advise

Study Methods

The Indiana Trails Study used a number of methods to obtain research data about the trails, trail use levels, trail management, trail users and trail neighbors. These methods included:

- Traffic (user) counts using infrared trail counters at select trail segments
- User survey through use of intercepts and follow-up mail survey techniques
- Mail survey of adjacent property owners, referred to as trail neighbors
- Phone interviews with local realtors

All research was conducted and completed between June and November 2000 by the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands at Indiana University. A detailed description of study methods is provided in Appendix B for further review.

Figure 2: Location of Indiana Trails Study Cities

